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Allotment

Definition

An allotment is a small piece of land used to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Plants

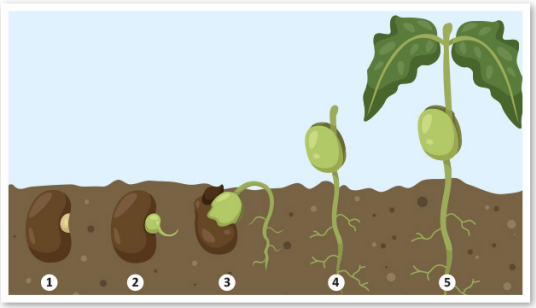
Plants provide living things with food, shelter, medicines, fuel and chemicals. Most importantly, plants supply the oxygen in the air that many living things need to breathe.

Growing plants

Most plants grow from seeds into seedlings and then into adult plants. For this process to take place, specific conditions are required. Plants need the right amount of water, nutrients, air, light, warmth, space and time to grow healthily. If a plant does not have one or many of these requirements, it's growth will be affected and it could die.

Stages of plant growth

1. A seed remains inactive until the conditions are right for germination and growth.
2. If a seed has the space, water and warmth it requires, a root breaks out of the seed coat and grows downwards into the soil.
3. More roots develop and a green shoot appears. The shoot breaks open the seed coat and pushes upwards and out of the soil.
4. The shoot grows towards the light as the plant's roots absorb water and nutrients.
5. Over time, the plant develops and leaves appear.

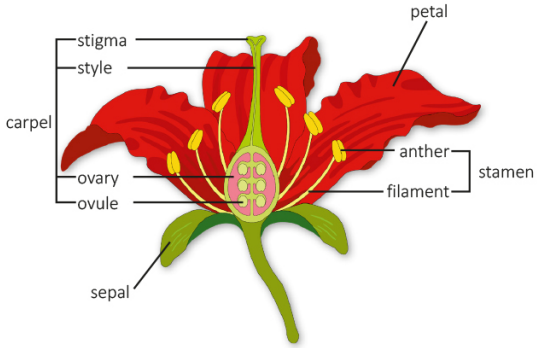


Wildlife

Some animals play a vital role in plant reproduction and pest control. Insects help plants reproduce by moving pollen from one plant to another. Earthworms burrow through the soil, allowing air and water to reach the roots of plants. However, some animals damage plants. Cabbage white butterflies lay eggs that develop into caterpillars that eat crops, slugs eat the leaves of growing plants and moles burrow underground, disturbing roots.

Parts of a flowering plant

Flowering plants come in different colours, shapes and sizes but they all have a similar structure. Most have a female part called a carpel and a male part called a stamen.



Plant reproduction

Plants reproduce to make new plants. All flowering plants go through the following cycle to produce a new plant:

1. Brightly coloured or fragrant flowers attract insects.
2. Pollinating insects, birds, animals or the wind move pollen grains from the anther of one flower to the stigma of another. This is called pollination.
3. A pollen grain travels down the style to reach the ovary.
4. The pollen fertilises an egg cell called an ovule inside the ovary.
5. The ovule develops into a seed inside a fruit.
6. The seeds are dispersed.
7. When the seed lands on the ground and the conditions are right, a new plant grows.

Tip: Print in A3.

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Monthly allotment timetable

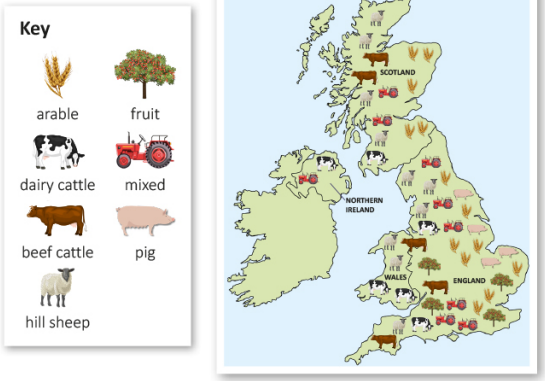
January	Prune fruit trees and harvest root vegetables, such as leeks and swedes.
February	Sprinkle fertiliser around the base of fruit trees, roses and other flowering shrubs.
March	Sow root and stem vegetables outdoors, covering with fleece, cloches or cold frames. Sow plants such as tomatoes, chillies and peppers indoors.
April	Sow herbs, salad leaves and fast-growing crops, such as radishes, in sunny planting beds outdoors.
May	Go on evening hunts to remove snails and slugs, especially during damp weather.
June	Water vegetables and fruits regularly, especially during dry, sunny weather.
July	Water crops regularly and remove garden pests from plants by rubbing or washing them off immediately. Feed indoor plants with fertiliser.
August	Harvest crops that are ready, such as broad beans, carrots, peas and tomatoes.
September	Pick unripe tomatoes and place them in a paper bag to ripen. Collect apples and wrap in newspaper. Store them in a cool dry place.
October	Continue to harvest crops and collect blackberries from hedgerows.
November	Support brussels sprouts with sturdy canes and pile earth around the stems.
December	Clear old crops and weeds from the allotment, dig over the soil and put any fallen leaves on a compost heap.

Farming

When plants and animals are grown or reared on a large scale for people to eat, it is called farming. The food people buy from supermarkets is farmed all over the world. Farmers living in different countries work in different climates and landscapes so they adapt their farming practices to their local conditions. Because of this, the types of farming vary across the world.

Farming in the UK

There are three main types of farming in the UK: arable, pastoral and mixed. Arable farms grow crops and cereals. Pastoral farms rear animals. Mixed farms grow crops and keep animals. The map below shows farming practices across the UK.



Farming around the world

Farming across the world can take a range of forms, including subsistence, fair trade and intensive farming. Foods that are farmed in other countries include rice that is grown in China, salmon that are reared in Europe and tea leaves that are grown in Africa.

Glossary

disperse	To scatter.
cloche	A translucent cover for protecting plants.
fair trade	A way of buying and selling produce to ensure farmers have good working conditions and get a fair price.
fertilisation	The process of pollen joining with an ovule, causing an ovule to become a seed.
fertiliser	A natural or man-made substance used on soil to make plants grow well.
germination	The process by which a seed starts to grow.
harvest	To gather crops.
intensive farming	A method of farming that produces a large amount of produce.
pollen	Tiny particles made by the anthers of a flower that fertilise the ovules of a different flower.
produce	Food such as fruit and vegetables that are grown or farmed.
prune	To cut off branches to remove dead wood and encourage growth.
reproduction	The process that produces offspring.
seedling	A young plant that is grown from a seed.
shoot	The first part of a plant to appear above the ground.
sow	To plant seeds.
subsistence farming	A method of farming where farmers grow enough food to feed their family.

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